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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT A US Newspaper-man's Visit

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1. Entering Czechoslovakia, the customs inspection was casual and we were cleared through in a few moments. The fact we were traveling as a party, and were doubtless expected, may have influenced this performance.
2. It did not seem strange at the time to see Malenkov's picture displayed everywhere, but after visiting Warsaw and Moscow it was evident they were not pursuing a uniform line as in the latter places it was conspicuously absent.
3. Our short stay of three days was spent in sight-seeing. On arrival we expressed a desire to interview President Zapotocky but received no invitation to do so, or any explanation.
4. My most interesting and revealing experience was an interview with a lady I had been asked to contact by my Russian teacher at the Berlitz School in the US. The two ladies had been friends in Iran during World War II.
5. At first she was reluctant to have any conversation at all but her hunger for news of her friend and the outside world was too strong to resist. She is a native Czech, married to a lawyer who had fallen into disfavor and been put to work in a factory. She said rather bitterly that by hard work he had progressed to the position of a glorified office boy. She works also and the two live comfortably, much as people in similar work in the US would, except for the lack of an automobile and television set.
6. When I asked her whether she cared if Radio Free Europe were discontinued, she wept and made evasive, incoherent statements evidently motivated by fear. They obviously listen to it. In reply to a question whether she had ever thought of escaping to the West, she would only reply that it was impossible. The lady's name is [REDACTED]
7. We also attended a style show which was announced in four languages; Czech, German, French, and English. I am no judge of the quality of the clothes displayed, but here and in other stores there was evident a real effort to do a better job of supplying the country's demand for consumer's goods.

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8.

9. We were free to go about and talk to anyone we met, which we did. I left Prague feeling the Soviets had sold the mass of the people on Communism and the US faces a formidable task if they expect to win them back to favor the West. I had hoped to find some hope of an uprising but found only the opposite.

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